

MA THE CLEVELAND MUSEUM OF ART

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PRESS RELEASE
Modern Arts

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The Year in Review

February 24 - April 17, 1988

The Cleveland Museum of Art's annual Year in Review exhibition, displaying together for the first and only time the more than 200 objects acquired during 1987, will be on view from February 24 through April 17.

"The goal each year is to seek challenging opportunities that will, it is hoped, add breadth to every part of the collection and, even more important, stature to each," Museum Director Evan H. Turner wrote in the introduction to the February Bulletin, which is the catalogue for the exhibition. The show will be mounted in the upper special exhibition gallery, with some photographs and works on paper shown in the prints and drawings galleries. Once again, Dr. Turner has written wall labels offering his insights on works in the show.

An exceptionally fine pair of 1st-century Roman bronze statuettes entered the ancient art collection in 1987. Hercules, a classical god known today for his physical prowess, and Lar, a household guardian spirit in the form of a curly-haired youth, were probably made in the same workshop. These two classical bronzes, with others in the collection, will be featured this fall in a major traveling exhibition organized by The Cleveland Museum of Art.

Among the most significant purchases last year was a 16th-century portrait of a prominent Dutch woman, the Museum's first example of northern Mannerist painting. The artist, Maerten van Heemskerck (1498-1574), combines a Netherlandish preoccupation with realistic detail with his acquired taste for Italian art of the High Renaissance and images from Roman antiquity.

2--year in review

The name of the sitter, Machtelt Suijs, and that of her husband, Dirick Teijlingen, can be identified by their combined coat of arms on the left. (One can assume the existence of a companion portrait of her husband.) The painting probably has been in private hands since it was commissioned and thus was unknown until it appeared at a Paris auction one year ago. The work was immediately accepted by scholars as a superior example of Heemskerck's work.

Another important find was a terra-cotta portrait bust of the distinguished landscape painter Hubert Robert, executed about 1780-90 by Augustin Pajou, a leading official sculptor of the French monarchy during its last years. At least three other such busts of Robert are known, and one version was exhibited at the Paris Salon of 1789. The Cleveland bust appears to be the liveliest and most vigorously modeled of all.

Francisco Goya's etchings of the atrocities of the Napoleonic wars, titled "Disasters of War," were so stirring and antagonistic to the French authorities that they could not be published during Goya's lifetime (1746-1828). The impressions made after his death lack the tonal nuances and complexities of the proofs pulled by the artist himself, so the acquisition of Goya's own proof of one of the most important subjects of the series, And There's No Help for It, is an especially valued addition.

In his travels to Asia, Chief Curator of Asian Art Michael R. Cunningham found an impressive 14th-century sculpture, carved from a single block of wood, of Lord of Human Desire (Aizen Myōō). This fierce Buddhist deity, which represents sensual enjoyment in harmony with spiritual wisdom, was purchased with a recent bequest from Elizabeth M. Skala, a hitherto unknown friend of the Museum. Another extraordinary Asian sculpture acquired in 1987 is an earthenware tomb figurine, Court Lady Holding Plum Blossoms, whose plump elegance reflects an ideal of beauty favored in early 8th-century China.

3--year in review

The Museum's already famous collection of Cambodian sculpture benefited from the addition in 1987 of a 7th-century standing Ganeśa. This elephant-headed figure, of beguiling charm, was revered by Hindus as the God of Prosperity and Wisdom.

"A particular satisfaction in the constant quest for acquisitions is the discovery of material previously unknown that uncovers a new dimension to art history," said Dr. Turner. This is the case for some of the material--once preserved in Tibetan monasteries--that was spared destruction during the Chinese invasion of Tibet in 1951. A 15th-century silk and gold embroidery of a celestial musician, along with a few others found in Tibet, are the only examples of Central Asian embroidery to have survived between the 9th and 19th centuries.

An American tambour desk, one of the finest and best-preserved examples of the work of John and Thomas Seymour, active in Boston around 1800, is the Museum's first large-scale piece of early cabinet furniture from Boston.

The most notable acquisition of contemporary art last year was a 1985 painting by Willem DeKooning, a dominant figure of the Abstract Expressionist movement of the 1950s. With its bold, interlocking shapes of pure color, Untitled XIII creates a sense of expansive openness.

The Museum continues to build its photography collection, and last year purchased a rare seascape by an early master of the medium, Gustave LeGray (1820-1882), a French artist who captured dramatic atmospheric effects. Adding breadth to the collection of mid-19th-century British photography are four prints by Fox Talbot and four by the Scotsmen, David Octavius Hill and Robert Adamson.

Gallery talks on the exhibition will be given on Wednesday, February 24 and Sunday, February 28, at 1:30 pm.